and cannot survive beyond its frontiers and, at other times, transcends those boundaries to become a national movement.

It was on this storied ground that, in 1899, General Servillano Aquino dispersed his army, shifting the action from the plain of Tarlac to the mountain of Arayat: what had been a national war of independence had shrunk again into tribal resistance. He was not the first to use Mount Arayat as a fort outside the law (the “banditti,” or fleeers from empire, had been there before him) nor would he be the last (the Huks, also fugitives from Fascism, would likewise use Arayat for bastion). But General Aquino, unlike so many “outlaws,” would survive Arayat, though his head was at stake when he came down at last from the mountain, the resistance there having been equated with “murder.”

He saved his head somehow and, like the Roman of adage, returned from sword to plow. But it was not a humble farm that he returned to but a great hacienda—for the general was, of course, of the principia; came from a family of landowners and gobernadorcillos; had studied at Letrán and Santo Tomás; had married an heiress; and was of the Masonic Order, the rebel club of the gentry. These are the ingredients—money, land, education, Masonry, and official position—that identify as a class the leaders of the Revolution, whether they be the Aguinaldos of Cavite, the del Pilars of Bulacan, or the Alejandrines of Pampanga; and such data resist any reading of the Revolution save as a movement of the middle class, at a time when the bourgeoisie had turned insurgent. Indeed, of the caudillo of Tarlac, Makabulos, it is said that he was “one of the few generals of the Revolution who were born poor.” Yet Makabulos, too, was of the principia, being a Solimán on his mother’s side and therefore of the royal house whence mostly sprang the Tagalog-Pampango patriciate. And though born poor, he was of the clerical profession.

Emotional misreadings of our history have spurred over the economic facts, which show that the barons of the richest and most powerful region of the country had, realizing their collective strength, decided to overthrow their overlord. These barons were the planters, merchants, landowners, barristers, intellectuals, priests and mayors who, from start to finish, provided the Revolution with leadership.

The revolt of the principia thus has a correct picture in the Aquinos of Tarlac.

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24 Luis Serrano, in the Makabulos Centennial issue of The Monitor (Tarlac).

María Clara’s Frontier

THE TARLAC of the Aquinos was the Benjamin of the confedera-
cy, being the last province to be born of the heartland. Though the vaunt is that Pampango realm extended to Cagayán before the coming of Spain, the truth seems to be that, then, as in the next three centuries, the tribe kept to the delta land of the Rio Grande and ventured but little, as settler, outside that plain, although ranging, as soldierly, all over the entire country and the seas beyond.

Up to the 19th century, San Fernando marked the northernmost limit of Pampango culture: of the proud, rich, populous terrain bustling with townships like Bacolor, Guagua, Lubao, Macabebe, Arayat, Mexico. Past San Fernando, the plain petered out into gravel and the landscape turned hostile: foothill and mountain range to the west, crocodile swamps to the east, and in between the gloom of aboriginal forest, where prowled, with deer and boar, the Zambal and the Aeta. (It was their arrows that had kept the plainsman to his riverbank.) The jungle was a day’s journey across by horse; the undergrowth was mostly a tough weed that the Aeta called tanlac or tarlac and it gave its name to this belt of wilderness between the land of the Pampangos and the Pangasinan plain.

Into this wilderness that had so long resisted both brown man and white man, various families headed by the Castañedas and the Migkels (these latter would, under the Clavería decree, change their name to Tañedo) began venturing in the 17th century, buying off the Negritos (who retreated to the mountains of Zambales) and clearing, for rice and cane culture, the area that is now Tarlac town. The settlement was considered a part of Pampanga but was not made a town until a hundred years
later, in 1788, when a Tanedo (Don Carlos Miguel) became its first gobernadorcillo.\textsuperscript{1} Other settlements sprang up in the wilds in the 18th century: Bamban in 1712, Capas in 1719; but not till the 19th century did the Pampanga push north into the jungle in earnest, setting up Angeles town (the period of establishment was from 1796 to 1829) as a gateway to the new frontier.\textsuperscript{2}

The reason for the northward push was the economic boom that began in 1785, with the organization of the Real Compania de Filipinas, which turned the country, as it was opened to foreign commerce, into an exporter. “This,” says Elidoro G. Robles, “was due mainly to the growing demand in the world market for Philippine products such as hemp, sugar, indigo, tobacco, coconut oil, etc., and to the help of foreign banks and commercial houses, which opened credits and loans to small and large land proprietors. With the importation of some machinery, sugar and sugar wine increased by approximately two-thirds of former total output.”\textsuperscript{3} Between 1840 and 1857, sugar exports swelled from about 146,000 piculs to over 700,000; and hemp exports, from some 8,000 to over 300,000 piculs.\textsuperscript{4} This was the era when Suai in Pangasinan became an international port, where Philippine rice was exported by the shipload to mainland Asia; and also the era when Batangas coffee became gold on the world market and gave rise to an opulent life-style in Lipa society. The jump in sugar prices caused by the Crimean War (1854-56) further boosted the boom in Philippine trade. Such are the facts that explain not only the taming of the Tarlac jungle but also the growing impudence of the principalitas, now fast becoming those “beasts laden with gold.”

As the demand grew for export products, more lands had to be opened for cultivation; and Pampanga, in “the first rank”\textsuperscript{5} as rice and sugar producer, was obliged to expand into the wilderness of Tarlac. By 1860, enough villages had been built there to require the creation of a Comandancia Militar, or constabulary zone, to protect the settlers. This region, along with Angeles, was known as Upper Pampanga (Alta Pampanga) to distinguish it from the older, Lower Pampanga of the delta country. In 1872-73, the towns of Tarlac, Bamban, Capas, Concepcion, Victoria, Anao, Gerona, Camiling and Paniqui were separated from Pampanga (or Pangasinan) and organized into a new unit: the Province of Tarlac.\textsuperscript{6} It is no paradox that a province so identified with rebelliousness should have been sired by prosperity.

The Aquinos must originally have been, like most of the Tarlac settlers, from Lower Pampanga; they moved north in mid-century. By the 1860s they were among the landowners in the region that was to become the town of Concepcion. The residential hub of the settlement, then known as San Bartolome, was, not for the first time, washed away by flood in 1861, which prompted a decision to rebuild on higher ground. One faction, led by the Luciano family, would build nearer the slopes of Mount Arayat; another faction, led by the Aquinos, Castros, Cortezes, Dizons, Felicianos and Laxamans, would move farther north. The schism resulted in the foundation of two settlements, one of which became the (Pampanga) town of Magalang; the other, Concepcion. (The original nucleus, San Bartolome, now a barrio of Concepcion, is still called Balaen a Melakuan, or Abandoned Town.) Concepcion was made a municipality in 1863, with Don Pablo Luciano as its first mayor, or gobernadorcillo. The list of municipal heads up to the 1890s shows that only about a dozen families controlled the town and alternated in administering it; the same surnames keep recurring. An Aquino (Don Melencio) was mayor in 1881-83; another Aquino (Don Braulio) occupied the post in 1885-87.

However, in the 1870s, this Don Braulio Aquino was apparently still resident in Angeles, married to Doña Petrona Aguilar de Hipolito, by whom he had three daughters and four sons. One of the boys was Servillano, the future general, born in Angeles on April 20, 1874, and baptized there. By the time he was of school age the family was already living in Concepcion, for there he learned his cartilla.

In the short autobiography he wrote in Pampanga before he died, he says that he “first studied at the barrio guardhouse in San Antonio, with Pedro de la Cruz as my teacher.” At the age of nine, Mianong, as he was called at home, was sent to Mexico town, where he was a boarding student for three years in the school run by Don Felix Dizon. “At that time,” recounts his autobiography, “the system of instruction consisted of one year in the primary course and five years in the secondary, after which one took an examination for the degree of bachelor of arts.”\textsuperscript{7} The degree was

\textsuperscript{1}In the Tarlac wilderness was born the Philippine theater, in 1750, when Sultan Ali Mudin was baptized in the settlement of Paniqui, on April 28, and to celebrate the occasion the spectacle that became known as the moro-moro was first presented. The moro-moro was to make the art of arnis very popular in Tarlac, where, “its said, in the old days, everybody was an esgrimador, or swordsman. General Makabulos came from a town, La Paz, famed for its fencers and was himself an esgrimador of repute.

\textsuperscript{2}Data in this paragraph are mostly from Tarlac: Now & Then by Vicente M. Catul.

\textsuperscript{3}The Philippines in the 19th Century, pp. 267ff.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 130.

\textsuperscript{5}Henson, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{6}In the original organization of 1872, Tarlac also included the towns of Mabalacat, Porac, Magalang and Floridablanca. In 1873, these towns were returned to Pampanga, but three towns formerly of Pangasinan—Anao, Gerona and Paniqui—were added to the new province of Tarlac.

\textsuperscript{7}There was only one year of the primary course because it was mostly merely a review or remedial course, enrolles being expected to be already able to read and write. The cartilla, or ABC primer, was learned at home, on mother’s knee; or in a neighborhood school (as Mianong Aquino learned it); or under professional tutors (as his sons would do).
a requisite for enrollment in college; the medium of instruction was, of course, Spanish, in which the young Servillano developed an elegant style. Another elegance acquired from his school years is revealed by his letters, written in an elaborate but always clear penmanship, as beautiful as the script in church records of those days.

Mianong Aquino was not to finish his prepping at the boarding school in Mexico. In 1885 his father, Don Braulio, became mayor of Concepción, and Mianong was sent to Manila, to study under Dpm Enrique Mendiola, who conducted a school in the arrabal of Sta. Cruz. Possibly because of the difficulties of boarding in the city, Mianong, after a year with Señor Mendiola, was transferred to San Juan de Letrán, where, as an interna, he completed the preparatory course and became a bachelor of arts. He stayed on in Letrán to study land surveying, then moved on to the Universidad de Santo Tomás, where he enrolled in law, a course he was to drop out of when he married. The marriage was to unite the Aquinos with one of the “original” families of Tarlac, the Tañedos.

The Tañedos (formerly the Miguells) had come to Tarlac when it was still virgin wilderness and, having bought off the aborigine with coin and bead, proceeded to push back the jungle, until their clearings extended all the way to Nueva Ecija. So vast were their holdings that, according to Tarlach legend, if you knew how to go about it, you could ask the Tañedos for a plot and be given an acre.

In mid-century, a young Macabebe named Pablo Quiambao wandered into the northern frontier and, in what was then the town of Murcia, fell in love with a Tañedo girl. This Pablo Quiambao came from a well-to-do family, had gone to the proper schools, but was suspect to the authorities as a freethinker and propagandist. Possibly to spare his family trouble, he left home and took to the road, acquiring in vagabondage a sort of Robin Hood fame: the young lord who had cast his lot with peasant and fugitive, ever riding his horse towards the outraged and the outsider. But in Tarlach it was a rich girl who caught his eye: the Tañedo daughter named Lorenza.

The story goes that in the seven years he wooed Lorenza he succeeded in speaking to her only four times. And he saw her only when she went to church or looked out a window. Then her mother would call out: “Who is that Macabebe loitering out there? Does he see those coconut trees? Tomorrow I want to see all their fruit picked and heaped in the yard.” The next day, before sundown, the picked fruit would be pyramids in the yard, Pablo Quiambao having recruited friends to help him in the picking. Or Lorenza’s mother would call out that the fences needed mending, or the roof a new coat of thatch, or the kitchen a supply of deer meat. The culminating labor was the harvesting of the Tañedos’ extensive ricefields in Murcia, which, the old lady let it be known one day, she wanted to see reaped clean by the following sundown. So big a chore to be done in one day! But Pablo Quiambao rode back to Pampanga and assembled his kinsmen in Macabebe and Sta. Ana, and with their numerous help completed the labor before the stipulated sundown.

Soon after, he and Lorenza were married; and the principal house in Murcia that was known as the Tañedo house now became known as the Quiambao house, would later be known as the Aquino house — for here, too, Servillano Aquino would come to live, when he married the youngest daughter of Pablo and Lorenza Quiambao.

Of Lorenza, what’s chiefly remembered is that, in a province famous for its swordsman, she commanded awe as esgrimadora, being as expert as her husband in the art of arms. The earliest memories of her Aquino grandchildren were of their grandfather and grandmother fencing spiritedly, bolo in the right hand, dagger in the left (or staves to represent those arms), until one of the combatants had knocked off the weapons of the other — and how it was their grandfather who was often disarmed and had to yell Basta ya! This skill in arms Lorenza was to pass on to her daughters, as necessary equipment, for the arms was not just for sport in the Tarlach of those days: a frontierland still so boisterous that a woman, even a lady, had to know how to use arms and defend herself. The Quiambao daughter who became the wife of Servillano Aquino was to die defending her home and family, fighting with the arms her mother had taught her to use, and with the same courage that had made her mother a legend. For another story about Lorenza Quiambao is how, in pre-revolutionary days, the Guardia Civil having been sent to pick up her husband on some charge or other (Pablo Quiambao, though now a top principal of Tarlac, was still in bad odor with the authorities, being a Mason), Lorenza met the constabulary at the door, refused to let them enter, and blocked the way so resolutely that the soldiers had to retreat. The look in her eye sufficed to make them back down. Doña Lorenza lived to a great age (she died in 1926) and even in old age could display the skill that made her a famous esgrimadora in the home province of María Clara. That this girl, wellborn, well-to-do, well-bred, and so sheltered that, in seven years of wooing, her lover could speak to her only four times, was nevertheless, as her prowess in arms showed, no helpless violet, is indication enough that the genius María Clara we scorn today as inert may be a figment of our own inventing, with no relation either to Rizal’s heroine or to the actual women of her time.

Of the five children born to Pablo and Lorenza Quiambao, four were girls: María, Petronilia, Isabel and Guadalupe. The second girl, Petronilia, married Luciano Estrada, a teacher from Pangasinan who turned to busi-

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*Data in this section provided by the general’s son and daughter: Gonzalo Aquino and Fortunata Aquino de Yuson.*
ness in Tarlac; they had two children: Salvador and Saturnina. The youngest Quiambao girl, Guadalupe, married Servillano Aquino; they had three sons: Gonzalo (born in 1893), Benigno (1894), and Amando (1896). According to family recollection, Gonzalo and Benigno were born in the Quiambao house in Murcia, where their parents lived during the first years of their marriage. Then Mianong Aquino moved his family to Concepción, where Amando was born, in a house Don Mianong had built on Calle Real. There they stayed until 1897, when Servillano Aquino joined the Revolution.

The young planter and surveyor moved in a world bounded by five towns: Tarlac, Murcia, Concepción, Magalang and Angeles, in each of which his family or his wife’s family had land and kin. In Angeles lived his two sisters, Brigida and Maria, both of whom had married into a Creole family, the Ganzons. In Magalang lived a married half-sister, Elena Gueco, child of his father, Don Braulio, by a second marriage. In Murcia and Concepción lived his immediate family. And in Tarlac town were his wife’s kin, the Tañedos, and his closest friends, the Castelví boys.

The Castelví have a page in Tarlac history. They were cousins of the king of Spain but for some reason had been “banished” to the Philippines in the 1880s. The head of the family, Don Enrique de Castelví, Count of Villanueva, was provincial treasurer of Tarlac during the decade before the Revolution; and so well did he like it there that, when reassigned to Cagayan, he found one excuse after another to stay put, though the Cagayan assignment carried a raise in pay. The Spanish community in Tarlac was scandalized by the count, because he did not act as one, and by his family, because they preferred the company of the natives to that of their fellow Spaniards.

“The sons of the count had taught the Spanish save name and look; for, within, their sentiments, their customs, were more of the country than Spain; hence, it was not surprising to see them barefoot, on horseback, thumb on stirrup, in the manner of the natives; or to see their sisters smoking in the company of milady the countess, who, apparently, had acquired from her husband many of the customs of the country.”

Of the Castelví boys—Alfonso, Juan and Jaime—the closest to Servillano Aquino was Alfonso; they were to become compadres. Two of the

boys became employees of the railroad and were prodigal with passes for their friends the Aquinos, at whose farms the Castelví were always welcome, for a picnic in the fields or a hunt in the woods. By the time of the Revolution, according to Carlos Rfa-Baja, the Castelví had become suspect because of their “alienation from everything that’s Spanish, an alienation that became more marked from day to day, and to which must be added their ever closer friendship with the natives.” In the summer of 1898, when the rebel troops were closing in on Tarlac town, it was noted that the Castelví boys would go out hunting, themselves alone, “even on days when it was known for certain that parties of insurgents moved in the vicinity.” A piquant footnote today, but what a horror story then: cousins of the Crown involved in a colonial uprising against the Crown!

Just before the fall of Tarlac the entire Castelví family vanished from town. Carlos Rfa-Baja, who is very bitter against them (he even hints at a sinister blot on their escutcheon), has no doubt that they were all the time in league with the revolutionaries, who, through them, could have known everything that was going on inside the town, in the same way that the Castelví, as proved by their timely evacuation (which demoralized the town’s defenders), would have known everything that was going on outside the town. The main contact would have been between the two close friends, Alfonso Castelví and Servillano Aquino, the latter then heading part of the army that Makabulos had thrown into the siege of Tarlac. The Spaniards must have felt their mistrust justified when, a year later, Alfonso Castelví became a captain in the troops led by his friend, General Aquino, in the war against the Americans.

Another Aquino friend was Francisco Makabulos Solimán, at whose urging Don Mianong, already a Mason, joined the Katipunan in 1896, with Buenavista as his nom-de-guerre. Makabulos, a Tagalog-Pampango (his mother came from Tondo), was a farmer’s son who had risen from parish clerk to fiscal, and from journalist to poet and playwright, and from swordsman to revolutionary organizer — and nowhere was the Revolution more a poetic justice than in Tarlac, where it was a Solimán that overthrew Spain. When on January 24, 1897, Makabulos (the name means “let loose”) rose up in his hometown of La Paz and let go with the “First Cry of Tagumpay” (which started the Revolution in Tarlac), the native nobility, or principality, had the perfect name round which to rally — a name old in glory among the two tribes, the name of the last king of Maynila, who had fled upcountry to summon the datus to a war against the Spaniard, and who had not fallen in Bangkusay but simply vanished, in the manner of those heroes of myth that slumber now in cave or forest, until their time to return. Time turned back when the Cry in La Paz summoned the frontier of an ancient alliance to resume the lost war.

Solimán was let loose again.

9Father of Eva Estrada Kalaw, the senatora, who carried on her grandmother’s, or what might be called the authentic Maria Clara, tradition by becoming a famous sharpshooter.

10The Aquinos are a marrying tribe. Don Braulio married twice; his son Servillano married three times; and Servillano’s three sons and one daughter were to rack up a total of eight marriages. Don Braulio’s daughter Elena married a Gueco of Magalang and was the mother of Pacita Gueco, first cousin of Benigno Aquino, Sr. Thus, when Pacita Gueco married Dimoing Romualdez, she became a relative of both Imelda Romualdez and Ninoy Aquino.

11Carlos Rfa-Baja, El desastre Filipino: Memorias de un prisionero, chapter 19.

12Rfa-Baja, pp. 161ff.

13Interview with Don Gonzalo Aquino, the general’s eldest son.
El Real de Camansi

TWO FIGURES—the urban Katipunero and the cosmopolitan Ilustrado—explain why the Revolution has been misread as a movement of the dispossessed. On the one hand it is pictured as starting with the uprising of the Manila proletariat, in the person of Bonifacio; on the other hand it is pictured as rejected and betrayed by the propertied classes, in the person of the Ilustrado.

Such readings can only bewilder, as if one were to read Roman history on the assumption that Spartacus succeeded in his revolt, or English history on the premise that it was King Harold who won in the Battle of Hastings. For the conclusive fact about the Bonifacio uprising is that it failed at once—and that the failure ended that movement of the Manila proletariat. Only in a most general way can the Revolution that later broke out in Cavite be linked to the fiasco in Manila, the natural effect of which was to discourage so utterly the Katipuneros in the provinces they could not but abandon all thought of revolt—as definitely happened in Bulacan, and as apparently happened in Tarlac. Far from starting a fire, the fiasco smothered it. Had Aguinaldo and the other leaders in Cavite not been stubborn enough to start a fire on their own, neither Bonifacio nor ‘96 would be more than footnotes in our history.

The disconnection is recorded in Aguinaldo's autobiography. Informed that Bonifacio had set the uprising for August 29, Aguinaldo and his group are dismayed: how could the Manileños take the city when they had “only bolos, daggers and spears”? Aguinaldo was “restless and worried.” Nevertheless, on the night of August 29, he goes to the Kawit bridge (from where he can see Manila) and awaits the signal for the attack: the extinguishing of the lights on the Luneta. He watches till dawn, the lights are still on. The revolt attempt has flopped. Aguinaldo thinks of the Manila Katipunan as a moth that flew so close to the flame.
it got its wings seared. And there '96 would have ended—but for the Catipuneros' decision to start their own revolt. 

That this was a new effort and that from it, not from the Manila fiasco, sprang the subsequent risings in the provinces can be proved by what happened in Bulacán. There, too, the Catipuneros, led by Don Vicente Enriquez, assembled on the night of August 29, ready to start the revolt with an attack on the San Nicolas garrison. But before they could move, one of their leaders, Doroteo Karagdag, arrived with the news that "the Catipuneros had miscarried in Balintawak (había abortado en Balintawak)." The would-be rebels immediately dispersed, returning to their homes, says Enriquez, "with disillusion in the heart." That was the end in Bulacán of the Bonifacio phase of the movement: "disillusion." Weeks later, the Bulakeños heard of the "successive triumphs" of the Revolution in Cavite and, recovering heart, rose up in arms, marched on Paombong, seized control of it and set up a government that looked to Cavite for support. From then on, the rebellion in Bulacán faced towards Aguinaldo and Cavite, not towards Bonifacio and Manila. The Revolution had found its milieu.

A similar development can be inferred in Tarlac, which poses a riddle in the time gap between August, 1896, and January 24, 1897, when the Revolution started in that province. This lag has been interpreted as a coolness on the part of the Tarlateños to the idea of revolt; but the more logical explanation is that they, too, upon hearing of the fiasco in Manila, had been "disillusioned"—and were not to be inspired to act until the news finally reached them that the revolt was succeeding in Cavite. In January, 1897, Aguinaldo had taken all Cavite province, except the port, and from Zapote was threatening the approaches to Manila.

The sequence is clear enough: from an initial disenchantment to a revival of hope with the emergence of a new leader. For what collapsed in Balintawak and San Juan was not merely a revolt attempt but a recognized leadership. After the battle of San Juan, Bonifacio vanished into the hills of Montalban: that was his end as Supremo. Even if he had remained accessible it is doubtful that the provinces, so disillusioned by his failure, would have cared to follow him further. With leadership gone, it also seemed, was the idea of revolution itself. So, the provincial

Catipuneros hung up their arms—which explains the hiatus in the action. Then, in Cavite, begins to rise the figure of Aguinaldo, increasingly attractive as leader because a successful one, and now the provinces have a new leadership round which to rally.

That was the leadership that gave unity to the various risings in the Tagalog-Pampango region, for which the common mainspring was the success of Aguinaldo, not the failure of Bonifacio—a vital distinction, since the effort that succeeded with Aguinaldo was of the middle class, while the attempt that, alas, failed with Bonifacio could have been a proletarian revolution. The distinction already existed before August, 1896, in the difference between the Katipunan in Manila and the Katipunan in the provinces. Bonifacio tried to recruit for the Katipunan the Manila bourgeoisie; he failed, and the Katipunan in Manila remained a strictly proletarian organization. But in the provinces it was a different story: what the Katipunan chiefly recruited there were the landed gentry, like the Aguinaldos of Cavite, the Aquinos of Tarlac. Any theory of the Revolution as a movement of the masses will be embarrassed by the economic backgrounds of its provincial organizers, whose leadership shows it to have been, like the American Revolution, an enterprise of the middle class, at a time when the middle class had become revolutionary, because it had to break out of obsolete institutions that were crumbling its growth.

1 The influence of these backgrounds leaps out in item after item of Mr. Cati's Builders of Tarlac History, which piles up proof that in Tarlac, as elsewhere, the Revolution was made by the landed gentry. Don Aurelio Pinedo, who organized farmers, vaqueros, professionals, laborers and small businessmen, was born into a wealthy family. Don Mariano Barrera, who organized a "rebel force," was born into "a prominent family of Bacolor." Don Jose Espinosa, who was on the medical staff of Makabulos, had "vast landholdings." Don Cayetano Rivera, one of the signers of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato, came from a "wealthy landowning family of Magalang." Don Alfonso Ramos, a captain in the revolutionary army, was a Creole who had married into the wealthy Espinosa family. Don Manuel de Leaño, a recruiter for the insurgent movement, was a prominent hacendado. General Gregorio Rómulo was, of course, of the family already top-drawer in Camiling. And Doña Justa Valeriano de Urquijo, the "Heroine of the Revolution" in Tarlac, came from "a family of means and influence." Since most of these figures were involved in both a family and a second phase of the Revolution, their prominence makes doubly puzzling the current myth about their class: that it stayed aloof at first from the Revolution, then tried to "capture" it, and then abandoned it.

Maybe the trouble is that our history is indeed written from a "foreign" point of view, meaning the Manila point of view. Manila is always the particular instance from which a general statement is derived. Since the Manila bourgeoisie rejected the Katipunan, then the Philippine bourgeoisie must be said to have rejected the revolutionary movement. Since the Katipunan in Manila was proletarian, then the Katipunan in the provinces must also have been proletarian. And since the Manila middle class, whose cause was lost, abandoned Aguinaldo and fled back to Manila, then the Philippine middle class must be said to have abandoned the Revolution—and never mind all those wealthy provincians who stuck it out with the last cause from Caleocan to Tarlac, and beyond. The fact is that the Revolution was primarily a provincial event, during which, for once, Manila was not the theater of history.1

2 When on the success of the revolt in Cavite the Manila Katipuneros abandoned their Supremo and began trekking to Cavite, the Catipuneros sneered at these "alsal balutan" as "people from other pueblos" who would now take over the revolution the Catipuneros had made. The more arrogant refugees were hidden to go back to where they had come from and there "conquer territory from the Spanish government as we have done here . . . and no one will interfere with you." (Santiago Alvarez at the Tejeros Convention.)

3 The disillusionment of the Bulakeños and their subsequent recovery of heart upon hearing the good news from Cavite is described in detail by Teodoro M. Kalaw in his biography of General Gregorio del Pilar.
These provincial leaders of 1896-97 were as a group amazingly homogeneous and can be typified by Aguinaldo and Servillano Aquino. Both were of the principals; both were educated men though of limited schooling (Aguinaldo was only briefly at Letran; Aquino only briefly at Santo Tomas); both were country squires who became capitán municipal; and both were provincial in the sense that they were rooted to their own particular piece of backwoods, with little knowledge of city life, yet alone the great world outside the islands. Such were the folk, purely petite bourgeois, that engineered the Revolution during its first phase: 1896-97.

With 1898 comes a vivider breed: the Ilustrado. Though the Ilustrado sprang from the middle class, a number of qualities differentiated him from it. He was more learned, having schooled abroad; and more worldly, having spent in Madrid and Paris; and more confidently audacious, because, in most cases, he simply had more money. The difference becomes obvious if we put an Aguinaldo or Aquino besides such cosmopolitans as Rizal, Pedro Paterno, the Lunas, the Alejandroños, the Pardo de Tuveras. Inevitably there was conflict between the newcomers and those who had borne the brunt of battle since ’96; but this conflict can hardly be deemed a class war, being only a middle-class intramural, the kind of bourgeoisie in-fighting that provides material for an Austen or a Proust. Jane Austen’s county families know they are as good as anybody, yet feel a shade less confident when a duke enters. Something of the sort happened when the Ilustrado joined the Revolution. Aguinaldo becomes aware of his limitations, protests too much his lack of schooling (the reason he gave when he offered to resign), yet at the same time tries to thwart these glitter folk he is so in awe of. When he needs a resident egghead he does not turn to them; he chooses somebody like Mabini, who is an intellectual risen from the peasantry and therefore is one intellectual that Aguinaldo can feel superior to. His ambiguous attitude towards the clase ilustrada y rica was to lead to the tragedy of Luna, the defection of the Legardas and Aranetas. But to interpret these events as signifying, on the one hand, an attempt by the middle class to “capture” a proletarian movement, or, on the other hand, an abandonment by the middle class of the Revolution, is to ignore the fact that, even when the glitter folk had fled back to Manila, the conduct of the Revolution still remained in the hands of the middle class. In fact, the Revolution ended as it had begun: as a movement of the rural gentry, of the old provincial principals. A gentleman farmer like Servillano Aquino was at the forefront when the struggle began in ’96; and it is he and his kind who are left to carry on the struggle after ’99, when even the “popular masses,” as Mabini and Alejandro observed, were turning away from the Republic and abandoning the Revolution.

It may be that this was the time the organic relationship between liege lord and liege began to break down: when the provincial Dons lost their war. In the wake of the disaster appeared the peasant army called the Guardia de Honor, which harassed the revolutionary troops, practised communism, and advocated the killing of landlords and the seizure of haciendas. When the landed gentry of Central Luzon called on the Republic to go against the rampaging Guardia, they revealed how little of a peasants’ war the Revolution was. The real “revolt of the masses” was happening outside it.

In 1896-97, however, the old fealty that bound liege lord and liege-men was still strong enough to enable the gentry to organize the private armies with which they fought the Revolution, each army undoubtedly composed, in accordance with tradition, of each lord’s kinsmen, dansemen and tenantry. So, during the Conquista, were the Spaniards able to push their empire: because the ally datus raised the necessary troops from among their liegemen. And so again, in the following centuries, was the empire kept intact: because the principals organized from among their tenantry the armies needed for defense. The arrangement worked as long as a covenant of mutual service wedded liege lord and liege-men. (A degenerate form of this tradition survives in today’s warlords and their private armies.) One effect of the Revolution seems to have been a shattering of this age-old mutual trust; by the 1900s, landlord and peasant form less and less a community, having split apart into opposing classes, who were once the different members of a single body. Which is why the Revolution, though not itself of the masses, can be said to have generated the revolt of the masses. But in 1896-97, the old communion, the old community, of datu and vassal could still be invoked; and the Revolution may have been the last time that Tagalog and Pampango followed their datus into battle from a sense of allegiance.

This feudal communion formed the scene in which Servillano Aquino moved as revolutionary, with Arayat, the mountain that symbolized the community, as his headquarters, until it was taken by the Spaniards in November; 1897. At the beginning of that year he had been elected capitán municipal (the title of town mayors from 1895, when the old title of gobernadorcillo was dropped) of Murcia, and was evidently confirmed in this position by Makabulos when a rebel government was set up in Tarlac. After the Cry of January 24, Makabulos had seized the garrison in La Paz, then marched on Tarlac town but was forced to retreat to the barrio of San Miguel, where he pitched camp and began harassing...
the garrison in the capital town. If the barrio he occupied was San Miguel de Murcia, then the Tañedo-Quimambao hacienda in the vicinity was among the first places liberated by the Revolution in Tarlac, and this would explain why Servillano Aquino is said to have been elected mayor of Murcia (this would be before January 24) and also appointed mayor by Makabulos (presumably after Murcia came under revolutionary control). He had moved his wife and children from Concepción back to his in-laws' house in Murcia.

Mianong Aquino was then 24, had been made major in the Makabulos army, and would have seen action for the first time during the hit-and-run raids on Tarlac town that finally forced the Spaniards to transfer the garrison there to Pangasinan. At the same time the young major was recruiting troops and organizing them.

"I would go to the neighboring towns," he says in his autobiography, "and induce people to join the revolutionary movement; and whenever we had a chance we attacked the enemy by surprise."

"Being capitán municipal of Murcia," says the biography written by his grandson, Ninoy Aquino, "naturally he had followers. He organized his men and took them to Sitio Camansi in the dense forest of Mount Arayat, where they pledged allegiance to the Katipunan and signed their names in blood."

The Spanish government was not to mount an offensive in Central Luzon until after Cavite had been taken back from Aquilano by the cazadores (as the Spanish expeditionary forces came to be known in the Philippines). Meanwhile, '97 was the kindergarten where the Tarlakeno learned the alphabet of war.

On October 11, 1897, occurred the incident that was to give Major Aquino a reputation as daredevilish as that of Gregorio del Pilar. Pretending to be passengers, he and four of his men entered the railroad station in Gerona and fell upon the cazaadores guarding it. One cazador escaped, but Major Aquino acquired five rifles.

Years later, when his name flickered back into the news, what one American daily in Manila chiefly remembered about him was this "killing of 9 Spanish soldiers on the railway station platform at Gerona, Tarlac."

"Aquino and 4 other natives dressed as peasants alighted from a train and sauntered by a squad on the platform, whipped short bolos out of their umbrellas and struck down the Spaniards in quick succession, secured their rifles and made off with them. This is still considered by the Filipinos to have been a great feat, because the Spaniards were armed with guns and the 5 natives were not." 7

8The narration here follows the sequence that Ninoy Aquino got from his grandfather and used in his biography of the general.
9Mga Guninang Himagsikan, p. 252.
10Castillo, Kasaysayan ng Unang Kilos ng Panhihimagsik sa Tarlac, p. 10.
Though the insurgents had been bottled up on the mountain, Monet knew there could be no peace in Central Luzon until the rebel stronghold in Camansi had been taken. The government offensive therefore shifted its drive to the sacred mountain. Preliminary probing was made in mid-September by the Spanish troops under Colonel Milans de Bosch and Lieutenant Colonels Carbo and Olaguer Felid. However, not till November did General Monet order the big push up the mountain. Monet made the town of Magalang his base; he posted troops along the Río Chico and the Río Grande and surrounding towns to block all route of escape to the beleaguered; then sent up a force divided into three columns: one of 600 men under Major Angel Fernández; another of artillery under Olaguer Felid; and the third, of reserve troops.

“All the environs,” says Manuel Sastreón, “of Camansi, or Sinukuan, as the rebels call it, lie hid in impenetrable jungle; and to reach the enemy position, where the insurgents were dug in and, as it were, swaddled in strong entrenchments, there are only two routes...” The fortified plateau measures 500 meters in length, and the two points of access... to that height are the route to the top of the mountain and the route down to the town of Arayat. One company and 50 Macabebe Volunteers were stationed on a boulder near the Piedra Blanca.”

At dawn of November 27, with General Monet himself at the lead, the two columns that were to knock out the Revolution in Pampango country began the steep ascent, first together, then separating to take one or the other of the two routes up to the rebel mesa. Despite a rainy storm, vanguards of the two columns had gained opposite edges of the plateau by ten in the morning; by eleven o’clock the artillery had opened fire; and by noon the two columns were effecting junction. As the government troops swarmed over the mesa, the insurgents abandoned their first line of defense and fell back to the secondary trenches but it seemed certain that they could not hold this position under the heavy barrage. Then suddenly the artillery ceased its fire; Olaguer Felid, after losing 23 men, had decided he didn’t have the proper mobile cannon for a further advance and had returned to Magalang to consult his officers.

Through the afternoon the government troops made six attempts to storm the insurgent position but were repeatedly repulsed. However, they managed to hold on to what ground they had gained. Night fell with the two forces still embattled on the heights of Sinukuan; the storm worsened but not even the wild weather was of much help to the insurgents as they tried, again and again during the night, to dislodge the enemy from the plateau.

The next morning, November 28, Olaguer Felid arrived with the cannon he needed; the battle was resumed; and presently the action was turning into a rout for the defenders, who fled the mesa in such disorder they...
left behind their arms and supplies. The Spaniards counted 93 rebel dead; in a nearby woods they found numerous horses and carabaos. But the supreme catch had eluded the government: neither Makabulos nor Aquino was captured when the Real de Camansi fell, nor indeed the greater number of the estimated 2000 rebel troops. The battle lost, they fled under cover of the storm and vanished into the wilds of Sinukuan.

The Battle of Camansi, or Sinukuan — one of the few actions of the first phase of the insurrection of which we have a detailed account (written as usual by the other side) — marked the defeat of the Revolution in Pampango domain and indicates what could have happened to Aguinaldo but for the Pact of Biak-na-Bato. If it be true that Makabulos was against the pact and refused to join Aguinaldo in exile because he felt that Aguinaldo should have continued resisting from his mountain hideout, then Makabulos had learned nothing from the disaster on Sinukuan. Aguinaldo evidently did and, by agreeing to a truce, showed himself a foier strategist than the Spanish government, which decreed its own doom when it ordered Monet to stop his highly successful campaign in the provinces. It was the Pact of Biak-na-Bato that saved the Revolution for a second time around.

After the fall of Sinukuan, Servillano Aquino hid in San Fernando but continued his recruiting work. Spies were set on his trail; a trap was laid for him; he was caught, taken to Manila, thrown into Fort Santiago, court-martialed and found guilty of sedition. This was during the first half of December, 1897. The rebel was sentenced to death before the firing squad.

"The sentence," he would recall later, "was read to me on a Wednesday and I was to be shot on Saturday."

THE PACT of Biak-na-Bato was to save Major Aquino's life. He would recount later, according to his son Gonzalo, that his head had already been shaved and his body "washed with chemicals" in preparation for the execution. His two elder sons, Gonzalo and Benigno (the latter was then three years old), had been brought to see him for the last time, at Fort Santiago, and Gonzalo recalls that they had to go down a deep stairway to the dungeon where his father, very thin and pale, stood behind bars, with other prisoners.

Between the Wednesday of his sentencing and the Saturday of his execution the Pact of Biak-na-Bato was signed (December 14-15, 1897) and automatically stayed the execution of condemned revolutionaries. They were not set free, however, until after the pact had been ratified by the revolutionary assembly (December 20) and a general amnesty was proclaimed by the government. By the time Mianong Aquino was released, Aguinaldo had already left for Hong Kong. Aquino immediately followed. Since he was not on the list of men that Aguinaldo proposed to take with him, he may have gone there on his own volition. On the other hand, his son Gonzalo says that Don Mianong always claimed that he had been deported by the government, which may mean that his release from Fort Santiago was on the condition that he left the country.

At any rate, he joined Aguinaldo in Hong Kong, stayed there five months, and became a devout Aguinaldo partisan. During the nastiness over the money held by Aguinaldo, Major Aquino was among those who signed the manifesto protesting "the infamous calumny which ill-will has set forth against the immaculate name of Don Emilio Aguinaldo" and asserting that "of the sums which this illustrious Chief has under his charge not the smallest amount has been misapplied, but that they remain